

April 30, 2012 Story for Weekly News

Walter M. Grace (1893-1951): Walter Grace was a Justice of the Peace (also called a Magistrate or an Alderman), and was Burgess (Mayor) of Kennett Square from the early 1940s until his untimely death. Always interested in trapshooting, especially when there was a team from Kennett vs. a team from West Chester, he became very active in the sport during the last 10 years of his life, and that's how I knew him so well. On South Street in Kennett lived two unmarried sisters and an unmarried brother, Frank, who took, as a second job, tickets at the Auditorium movie theater, owned by the Fire Company on State Street.

Walter, his wife (and after her death, a housekeeper), and their two children lived in a nice home on Center Street just south of the railroad. Living with them for a time was a young World War II widow, who became secretary to physician John A. Bellis. Walter's office was on the second floor of the building on the southeast corner of State and Union streets, the main intersection of the borough where Route 82 crossed Old U.S. Route 1. From an elevated platform on which he had his desk and with picture windows on two sides, he could survey everything that went on near this important intersection. Those brought in for a hearing would face the magistrate at this location. In an adjoining smaller room was his efficient secretary, one of the Fahey girls, who, like her boss, knew everyone in Kennett.

When four trapshooting clubs came together to form the Maryland-Delaware Trapshooters' League early in 1947, Walter Grace became captain of the Yorklyn (Gun Club) team. Yorklyn came in second to the Cedar Gun Club near Darlington, Maryland, in aggregate scores of the 12 shoots of the season. Elkton, Maryland, and the Wilmington Trapshooting Association were the other two clubs in the league.

In May 1948, Walter Grace and I traveled by train to the New York Athletic Club on Travers Island near Pelham Manor to participate one day in the Amateur Trapshooting Championship of America, the premier event of that club at the end of its trapshooting season. Since they shot over Long Island Sound, and boating took over during warm weather, the NYAC traps were active only from November through mid-May. The day we were there was a windy one, and the scores were low. John Moran of Indianapolis won the championship that day with 194 (out of 200), and I was runner-up with 190. Walter broke 156.

I roomed with Walter Grace at the Marcy Hotel in Bradford, location of the Pennsylvania State Championships in June 1948. Three other shooters from Kennett Square attended, and I joined their squad to make the needed five shooters. We shot together for three days, and on the final 100 on the last day, Walter broke 97, including the last 50 straight. Since normally he was a Class C shot at best, he was elated at his excellent score.

In early summer 1950, Walter Grace suffered a major heart attack and was confined to his home for several weeks. When he got back on his feet, he assumed a full workload again and resumed his love of trapshooting. At one of the Penn-Del League shoots at Yorklyn, he broke 50 straight, possibly the only time in his shooting career. In those days, sophisticated heart procedures were

unknown, and his strenuous activities proved too much for his weakened heart. He died near the end of May 1951, at the age of 58. His son, F. Walter Grace, a World War II hero, married one of the Sinclair girls but died not long after his father while still in his 30s.

Work Report: Twelve volunteers took part on Tuesday night and 11 on Thursday evening. On Tuesday, a second coat of red paint was applied to the “O” gauge circular railway, and electrical circuits were refined on the Rauch & Lang. There is some question about the 5-year-old batteries for this car, but the problem may still be that they have not been fully charged. Detailed painting on the underbody and inside the body of the Stanley Model 607 continued. The horn on the Model 740 was worked on. More important parts were located and fitted on the frame of the 607, and the new brake master cylinder was securely mounted. The windshield frame was put together (a lot of work, as the nickel plating had to be filed down so the two halves would fit together, and the attaching bracket could be applied). This frame plus the glass were taken to Kennett Glass Company for sealing the completed windshield.

On Thursday, the new access door on the top of the water tank from the 725 was finalized, after the cleaned tank was brought back to our shop by Lou Mandich. All tire pressures in the museum’s cars were checked for upcoming use. The horn on the 740 was completed and is working as it should again. Planning and assembly work on the frame of the 607 continued, the throttle is being worked on, and a new holding bar was made for this throttle. On Saturday, Jim Personti brought back the completed water tank for the Model 87, and it is in place in the car ready to be hooked up.

On Tuesday, the following were in attendance: Jerry Lucas (in charge), Bob Jordan (in charge of 607 project), Ted Kamen, Dave Leon, Dennis Dragon, Mark Hopkins, Tim Ward, Jeff Pollock, Emil Christofano, Rose Ann Hoover, Richard Bernard and Tim Nolan. On Thursday those who answered the call were Dave Leon (in charge), Steve Bryce, Richard Bernard, Jay Williams, Jerry Novak, Lou Mandich, Butch Cannard, Chuck Erikson, Robert Young, Bob Jordan, and Tom Marshall. Jim Personti, often with the help of Geoff Fallows, spent endless hours making two water tanks into one, which is now back in the Model 87 (see above).